

# WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

## COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: JULY 23, 2009

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### COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TESSIER  
O'CONNOR  
SHEEHAN  
BENTLEY  
KENNY  
MERLINO  
STRAINER

### OTHERS PRESENT:

SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES  
NICOLE LIVINGSTON, DEPUTY CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER  
SUPERVISORS PITKIN  
TAYLOR  
THOMAS  
VANNESS  
DUANE VAUGHN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WAIT HOUSE  
THOM RANDALL, THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL  
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 10:46 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the June 25, 2009 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sheila Weaver, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of the meeting agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is also on file with the minutes.*

Commencing the agenda review with Item 1, Ms. Weaver presented the Overtime Report for the past four pay periods. She said that although the number of overtime hours used over the four pay periods had remained primarily consistent, during the pay period ending June 21, 2009 the Child Protective Services (CPS) After-Hours division had used 48.8 overtime hours, which was more than usual. Ms. Weaver stated that, other than this one instance, they were doing very well in all other areas and she was pleased with the efforts her Department had made to contain overtime costs.

Ms. Weaver announced that Agenda Item 2 pertained to a request to amend the contract with WAIT (Welcoming Adolescents in Transition) House in the amount of \$20,000. She explained that \$20,000 was the amount typically contributed by Warren County to WAIT House and if the DSS contract was increased by this amount they would be able to submit the increased amount for reimbursement, as DSS expenses relating to WAIT House received 100% State reimbursement. Ms. Weaver advised that Duane Vaughn, Executive Director of WAIT House, was in attendance to answer any questions the Committee might have.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend the contract with WAIT House to increase the amount of the contract by \$20,000 and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 21<sup>st</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Vaughn advised that the WAIT House was a homeless shelter and provided emergency crisis triage for homeless youths ages 16-21 which had begun its operation on December 26, 2003. He added that since its opening, WAIT House had housed 514 youths and had worked with over 1,650 clients. Mr. Vaughn apprised that of the 1,650

clients served as a result of youth referrals, 743 were from Warren County, 431 were from Washington County and 308 were received from other Counties; therefore, he noted, Warren County referrals comprised the majority of the cases served.

Mr. Vaughn thanked the Committee and the Board of Supervisors for the past and future contributions they had generously made to WAIT House and he said that he was understanding of the County's budget crisis, as he was currently dealing with a similar situation in developing the WAIT House budget. In a continuing effort to support the youth and families served by WAIT House in the best possible way, he said that they had recently written a grant to apply for Federal Stimulus monies in the amount of \$2.7 million. Mr. Vaughn added that they had applied for an excess of \$300,000 in grant funding on behalf of Warren County to be used to support youth and family residents within the County who required assistance.

Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, advised that during a recent meeting with Ms. Weaver and Mr. Vaughn he had learned that the per night cost for placement of youths in WAIT House was \$95 per night, versus \$235 per night for placement in the Warren County Detention Home, which saved the County a great deal of money. Mr. Vaughn confirmed that the PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) per diem rate negotiated with the County was \$95 per night; he added that the services provided by WAIT House included tutoring services two hours per day, five days per week, as well as transportation to school, counseling and family mediation services, which were not provided by a lot of other agencies. He noted that WAIT House was struggling to financially support the programs provided as funding had decreased by 18% over the last year and a half. Mr. Vaughn stated that despite reductions in funding, the need for services continued to grow and he cited that in 2007 76 youths had stayed at the WAIT House and for 2009 they had already housed 66 and they were only a little over half way through the year.

Mr. Strainer apprised that a ground breaking ceremony was to be held in the near future for the second WAIT House location and Mr. Vaughn said that the ceremony was scheduled for August 14<sup>th</sup>; he added that there was also an upcoming fund-raising event scheduled for August 11<sup>th</sup> at the Wood Theater which would showcase a woman who was homeless and had since graduated from Harvard about whom a movie entitled "Homeless to Harvard" had been made. Mr. Vaughn apprised that the second WAIT House location would provide housing for pregnant and parenting teens and would be a transitional living establishment providing housing for up to one year.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Thomas questioned if there were typically a large number of repeat visitors for WAIT House services and Mr. Vaughn replied in the negative, explaining that the temporary residents of WAIT House were required to follow very strict rules including 9:30 p.m. curfews and 11:00 p.m. bed times, as well as chores that had to be done. He added that residents were also required to either be working, actively seeking employment or in school. Mr. Vaughn said that the number of repeat visitors was very low and it was the hope of WAIT House that those former residents that required additional help would return to the facility for assistance, rather than living on the streets. He then extended an open invitation to all of the Committee members to visit the WAIT House and see firsthand the services offered and the youths being served by the facility.

Mr. Tessier thanked Mr. Vaughn for attending the meeting and he encouraged the Committee members to partake of the invitation to visit the WAIT House.

Resuming the agenda review Ms. Weaver presented Agenda Item 3 which consisted of an informational note on transfers within the DSS Departmental Budget. She advised that within the Flexible Fund Family Services (FFFS)

Plan they had transferred \$213,706 to cover Title XX program expenses. Ms. Weaver noted that previously the expense consisted of Local Share funds; however, for the 2009-2010 term the cost would be 100% reimbursable through State funding. She stated that this was another attempt by her Department to shift monies in an effort to make operations more cost effective for the County.

Mr. VanNess entered the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Ms. Weaver stated that Agenda Item 4 referred to a letter she had recently received from the State advising of an additional FMAP (Federal Medical Assistance Percent) adjustment. She said that the adjustment would incur lower weekly payments as of July 22, 2009 and would net a savings of \$35,209 per week, totaling a \$2.5 million decrease in the Local Share for Medicaid costs, and the retroactive payment would be received from the State in September.

Mr. Bentley questioned whether the \$2.5 million in FMAP savings would be in addition to the \$2 million savings announced earlier in the year, leading to a \$4.5 million savings for the 2009 - 2010 term and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively. *Note: Subsequent to the meeting Ms. Weaver advised that she had mis-spoken and that additional savings announced would be \$500,000, thereby totaling a savings of \$2.5 million for the 2009-2010 term when added to the \$2 million savings previously cited.*

Chairman Monroe asked if the FMAP savings would be repeated for 2011 and Ms. Weaver replied in the negative. However, she noted, \$12 million had been included in the DSS budget for FMAP expenses and it appeared that only \$11.3 million would be used, leading to a significant savings within the budget.

Moving on to Agenda Item 5, Ms. Weaver apprised that the DSS had received Title IV-E stimulus monies that they were not expecting for the Foster Care and Adoption cases. She said that thus far they had received \$20,982 and were expecting an additional \$15,000.

Ms. Weaver advised that Agenda Item 6 consisted of a request to fill the vacant position of a Case Supervisor Grade B, base salary of \$37,934. She explained that the position had been vacated due to a resignation which had become effective on July 17<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Weaver apprised that the position received 80% Federal and State reimbursement and in reviewing the DSS Organizational Chart she had determined that the position was necessary for the continuation of operations within her Department.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Case Supervisor Grade B, base salary \$37,934, and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Continuing to Agenda Item 7, Ms. Weaver requested an executive session to discuss the employment history of a particular person. Mr. Kenny suggested that they review the referral items listed on the agenda and address the executive session request as the final item of business.

As requested, Ms. Weaver proceeded to Agenda Item 7, consisting of referral items, which she outlined as follows:

1. With respect to services for methadone clients, Ms. Weaver apprised that she was not aware of any new developments on this matter.

Mr. Payne said that he had spoken with Dr. Rugge earlier in the week who had advised that expenses in connection with the project were growing as he attempted to arrange operations for methadone treatments with the Whitney Young facility, but he continued to pursue the matter and hoped to be able to work out some of the expenses in the

process. Mr. Kenny said that the issue seemed to be taking an inordinate amount of time to finalize and he questioned whether Whitney Young was the only facility able to provide these services. Mr. Payne replied that although Whitney Young was the only area facility able to provide methadone treatments, there were two other treatments options available within the City of Glens Falls; however, he said, the doctors did not recommend either of these alternatives over the methadone treatments. Mr. Kenny asked if Glens Falls Hospital provided methadone treatments and Mr. Payne replied in the negative, noting that the expense and stringent regulations and licensing restrictions had deterred the Glens Falls Hospital from providing them. Mr. Kenny questioned the procedures used to administer methadone treatments to inmates at the Warren County Jail and both Mr. Payne and Ms. Weaver replied that they were unsure of the procedure used.

Mr. VanNess asked if the County continued to transport individuals to Albany via taxi for methadone treatments and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively. Mr. VanNess advised that he would contact the staff at the Warren County Jail to determine how methadone treatments were administered at the facility. He then reminded the Committee members that there were cases in which the individual requiring methadone treatments acquired written notes from a physician stating that they required separate transportation for the methadone treatments which led to increased transportation costs for the County. Mr. Payne noted that these individuals had previously been transported to Albany along with resident Veterans visiting the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Albany; however, he said, this was no longer done because the individuals seeking methadone treatments did not want to wait for return transportation while the Veterans were seeking medical attention. Mr. VanNess, and many of the other Supervisors present, agreed that this was outrageous and that group transportation should be required.

When asked for clarification on the legal requirements in connection with the issue, Ms. Weaver apprised that if one of the recipients gained a written medical statement stating that they could not ride with other individuals, the DSS had no choice but to provide them with separate transportation. She added that of the eight people being transported for methadone treatments, five of them required individual transportation. Mr. Tessier questioned how often the methadone treatments were administered and Ms. Weaver replied that initially the treatments were given daily and the number decreased based on the amount of time the individual received treatment, eventually decreasing to one treatment per week, which they would receive for the rest of their lives. She noted that a methadone treatment typically lasted about five minutes, requiring just enough time for the recipient to enter the clinic, swallow their medicine and leave. Ms. Weaver added that once a week each recipient was required to partake of a counseling session which lasted about 30-45 minutes.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. VanNess left the meeting at 11:07 a.m.

2. Ms. Weaver advised that she continued to work with the County Attorney's Office to discuss options regarding the workload of the legal unit and she hoped to have an update for the Committee at their next meeting;
3. Ms. Weaver reminded the Committee members that at a previous meeting she had been asked to determine whether unemployment costs were reimbursable for DSS positions. She advised that she had researched the matter and had found that the unemployment costs were reimbursable based upon the percentage of reimbursement associated with each position;
4. Respective to the third position to be deleted from the DSS, Ms. Weaver apprised that the Civil Service testing results she had been awaiting had arrived and she planned to canvass the list of eligible employees, subsequent to which a decision would be made as to which position would be filled and which would be abolished.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to enter into executive session to discuss the employment history of a particular person, subsequent to section 105(f) of the Public Officers Law.

Executive session was declared from 11:12 a.m. to 11:16 a.m.

Mr. VanNess re-entered the meeting at 11:16 a.m.

Upon reconvening, Mr. Tessier announced that no Committee action was necessary pursuant to the executive session.

Mr. VanNess announced that he had contacted the Sheriff's Office and had found that when methadone treatments were necessary for inmates at the Warren County Jail they sent an armed Correction's Officer and a Nurse to the methadone clinic in Albany to pick up the methadone medicine, only two doses of which could be gained per trip, to be transported back to the Jail and administered to the inmate. He said that the contact he had spoken with had suggested that before the Board of Supervisors decided to introduce a methadone clinic to the area they should travel to Albany to see the conditions surrounding that clinic before making any decision, as the conditions were atrocious and were certainly nothing the residents of Warren County would like to see brought to this area.

When questioned as to which physician was responsible for writing medical notations stating that a particular recipient required individual transportation to the methadone clinic, Ms. Weaver said that she believed the party dispensing the medication and providing counseling during treatment was also providing the note. Mr. VanNess questioned whether the County was required to abide by the medical notations based on the fact that they were not being written by the individuals physician and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively, noting that they had attempted to deny the individual transportation in the past and the State had overridden the refusals and mandated the transportation as directed.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Bentley, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist